VINDICATION
of the
SOLEMNITY
Of the Nativity of CHRIST;

Shewing the grounds upon which the Observation of that and other Festivalls is justified in the Church.

With a short Answer to certaine Quæries propounded by one *Joseph Hunning*, in opposition to the aforesayd practise of the Church.

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By *Thomas Warmestry*. D. D.

Let us follow after things that make for peace, and things wherewith we may edifie one another. Rom. 14. 19.
Unto you is borne this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luk. 1. 11.

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The Vindication of the ſolemnity of the Nativity of Chriſt, &c.

BEfore I come to anſwer theſe Queries, that I may make way for the clearing of mens judgements, I ſhall briefely lay downe the grounds upon which the obſervation of this, and other Feſtivalls is juſtified in the Church; which are theſe.

Firſt, It is a thing not onely lawfull, but juſtly due unto God, that he ſhould be praiſed publickly and ſolemnely for this, and other ſuch like great bleſſings as he hath beſtowed upon the Church by Chriſt, and that to this end the memory of them ſhould be preſerved in the Church.

Secondly, That for theſe ends, the Obſervation of a yearely day of memoriall is a meanes conducible in it ſelfe, and approved by God in Scripture, who made uſe thereof among the ancient people to ſummon, and ſtirre them up thereby to the praiſe of God for thoſe great bleſſings and deliverances which were beſtowed upon them.

Thirdly, That the appoyntment of ſuch dayes being conducible to thoſe ends before named, which are Scripture ends, hath ſo far its ground in the word of God.

Fourthly, That the Church hath a power from God to promote thoſe ends which are commanded in his word, by all kinde of meanes which are not contrary thereunto, and ſuch a meanes is this appointment of dayes, which hath been with approbation practiſed by the Church, even in the time of the Jewiſh Bondage, in the deſignation and ordaining of Feſtivalls yearely to be obſerved,

erved, which were not enjoyned by any expresse command of God, as is cleerely to be seene in the institution of the Feast of Purim, *Esther.* 9. 17. &c. and of the Feast of Dedication, *Macbab.* 4. 59. honoured and confirmed by the presence of our Saviour, *Joh.* 10. 22. 23.

Fiftly, That this power in the Church is, though unobservedly, yet in cleare consequence, is confirmed by divers arguments from the allowance and practise of Adversaries themselves.

As first, looke what power private Ministers challenge, that they must much more allow the Church: But they challenge a power to appoynt times for publick worship, which are not expressly commanded by God as upon Lecture dayes: *& go*, And there can be no reason why they should have more power to appoynt an houre or more in a day, then the Church a day or more in a yeare.

Secondly, There is as good reason that the Church should appoynt dayes of feasting, which are not commanded by God, as dayes of fasting, which are not commanded by God; since the end of the former is as exceptable to God, and more excellent then the latter, and hath no plea against it, that lyes not equally against the latter.

Thirdly, That there is much more reason that the Church should appoynt solemne dayes for praising God for Christ, and for spirituall blessings, then for temporall ones: But the latter is allowed and practised by the Parliament, as may appeare by the late Ordinance for the observation of the fifth of *November*, in memoriall of the deliverance of that very State, Church, and Religion from an outward destruction, which themselves now persecute; by the Army, in appoynting dayes of Thanksgiving for their bloody Victories over their brethren, in an impious way: Therefore the former, *viz.* the appoyntment of solemne dayes for greater and spirituall blessings, cannot reasonably be condemned by them.

Sixtly, This appoyntment of dayes to the purposes aforesayd, is not onely harmeleſſe, as not lying in opposition to any Law of God, but of excellent use and benefit to Gods people. 1. To preserve and recall the memory of these great blessings. 2. To stir up the people to the duties of praise.

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3. To call upon the Ministers in their severall charges to study, and handle those great, and necessary parts of Christian knowledge. 4. To give so many opportunities for the assembling of the people to holy duties. 5. For the rendring of those great and mysticall blessings familiar unto the people, thereby that being fulfilled in this sense, that the Psalmist speaketh in the 19. *Psal. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another; there is neither speech nor language, yet their speeches are heard among them.* Thus it comes to passe that the Calender of the Church, & the Cycle of the Festivalls presents, is as it were an easie and familiar Catechisme unto the people, and doth instruct them almost whether they wil or no in the apprehensions of those high points and comfortable motions of the conception, nativity, Circumcision, Manifestation to the Gentiles, presentation in the Temple, of the death and passion, resurrection, Ascention of Christ into Heaven, and of the sending of the holy Ghost, to bring home the fruit of all; which are as so many parts of the holy Antheme of the Church, the Epiphonema, or close of all which is in the Festivall of the Trinity, which is unto all the rest as the *Glory be to the Father, to the Sonne, and to the holy Ghost* &c. at the close of a Psalme, calling upon us to give honour and praise unto the Trinity for all those incomprehensible blessings and benefits whereby the worke of mans redemption is perfected and brought home unto us: This wisedome and piety of the Church is not understood, nor considered by those heady and haire brain'd people, that waigh things in the corrupt scales of of their owne contradictory and antecclesiasticall spirit; but they that are sober and peaceable discover and admire it, and blesse God for it, and do foresee with sad hearts the designes of Satan moving against this Church of ours, by the abolishing of these and and other usefull Ordinances and customes, to blot out by degrees the memory of the great and inestimable blessings of God in Christ, and to open the doore to prophanesse and infidelity: to the former benefits may be added, the mercy that doth hereby accrue unto servants, and the poore beasts in a relaxation of their labours upon such daies, the incitements that they administer unto workes of charity, neighbourhood, and hospitality; things very pleasing in the sight of God, howsoever disliked by those of this age that place religion in cruelty, Faction, and Se-

dition; and the nurcery, and ſupply that is thereby ſuggeſted unto the exerciſe of our ſpirituall joy, and delight in God, and his goodneſſe.

Laſtly, The authority of the Church both ancient and modern, both generall, and of this particular Church, comming upon us with all theſe warrants, and conveniences to ſerve the ends of God and Scripture, and ſtrengthened by the power of the civill Magiſtrate, and by the authenticall Lawes of the Kingdome in thoſe Acts of Parliament which have eſtabliſht theſe things, muſt either engage all that are within the verge of the Church, and of this Church and State eſpecially, unto a peaceable and pious obedience thereunto, or elſe leave the ſtaine of Impiety, Faction, and of a turbulent and diſorderly ſpirit, or elſe of folly and blindneſſe upon all thoſe that oppoſe it.

Indeed there is nothing free from temptations; but it is well ſaid of one, as I remember, and may be well conſidered of others, *that it is not* (at leaſt not alwaies) *the infirmity, but the excellency of things that maketh them the matter of temptation:* Abuſes of things that are good muſt teach us wiſedome and caution, but not ſet us upon confuſion.

And truly there is need of more watines in the obſervation of theſe dajes then hath been uſed by many.

1. That ſuperſtitiō be avoided, that we think not one day in it ſelf better or more holy then another, but only ſo far as they are actually deſigned or applyed unto the ſervice of God: we muſt remember that theſe and other particular times, as places, are but circumſtances in the time of the Goſpell, the ſubſtance is in the worſhip and ſervice that is given unto God thereupon, not in the obſervation of this or that particular day; which is in it ſelfe a matter of liberty, as the Apoſtle ſheweth, *Rom.* 14. 5. *&c. Col.* 2.16. And that may be a ſatisfactory reaſon why in the new Teſtament theſe things are not particulary, or expreſly inſoined in Scripture, becauſe theſe are but matters of Order, and of liberty; not of abſolute neceſſity, and therefore left to the moderation of the Church; but then we muſt remember that the liberty of Chriſtians is firſt the right and intereſt of the Body, and then of the Members, who muſt not urge their particular intereſt againſt publique moderations and conſtitutions in theſe things; yea, it is a maine liberty that belongs

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unto the whole body of the Church, that she hath power to restraine the liberty of private Members by publique authority for the publique good; but Superstition must be avoided, as I have said; nor humane authority must impose these, or any such like things, as substantiall, unalterable, or absolutely necessary to salvation; but as matters of Order, as holy circumstances, and meanes conducible unto higher ends, and so and no otherwise they are to be received and obeyed by the people: according to this is that of a late learned Father of our Church, *Non putandum plus sanctitatis uni diei inesse quam alteri, sed sciendum quod propter ordinem & præceptum Ecclesiæ aliasq; causas supra memoratas uno die magis quam alio convenimus, ad hos exercitia sanctitatis.*

And againe, *Non putandum, &c.* we are *not to thinke* that the *Church of God is tyed by any necessity to the immutable observation of these particular Festivall daies*: Sed statuendum, *saith he, dies hosce humanâ authoritate constitutos eâdem posse tolli & mutari, si utilitas & necessitas Ecclesiæ id postulaverit, nam omnia res per quascunq; : Causas nascitur per easdem dissolvitur: But it must be so judged, that these daies which are appointed by humane authority may be abolished, and altered by the same: where the profit and necessity of the Church doth require it; for all things are dissolved by the same causes whereby they are established*: But then this ought to be done upon good and true grounds, and by a power equall at least to that that hath established them. Bishop Davenant upon the Coloss. c. 2. v. 16. B B

2. There must be care taken that there be a prudent moderation used in the number of such daies, that nothing be imposed oover burdensome upon the people.

3. That they be rightly imployed, not in Superstitious worshiping of Saints or Angels, as is in use in the Church of Rome, nor yet in riot, intemperance, or any other sinfull liberty, as hath been the practise of too many amongst us, making little or no other use of such times, but to give themselves to idlenesse, loosenesse, and vanity; an evill that hath not onely violated the holinesse of these Festivals we speak of, but also the Lords day, which some have turned into *Sabbathum Vituli aurei*, into the *Sabbath of the Golden Calfe*, of which it is said, *Exod.* 32. That *The people sate downe to eate and drinke, and rose up to play.* Others into *Sabbathum Bovum & Asinorum*, the *Sabbath of the Oxe and the Asse*, spending it in eating and drinking, and doing nothing; and too many make

make little or no other difference betweene that and other dayes: But onely in putting on their better cloathes, and giving themselves to none, or else worse imployment then all the rest of the weeke, as if *bene vestiri & nihil agere*, To be well attired, and to doe nothing were to celebrate the Christian Sabbath.

B And indeed it cannot be denyed, but as this hath been the ill lot that too many have cast upon the Lords day, and other Festivalls: So it hath been too too much the share of the Solemnities appoynted for the celebrating the Birth of our Saviour, and the rest of the Festivalls that the Church hath joyned with it, which instead of being made dayes of prayse and thanksgiving to God, and of the exercise of other holy, christian, and charitable duties with that sobriety that becomes Christians, have been made dayes of riot, and gaming, and wantonnesse, and unlawfull liberty, as if men

B were to sacrifice to the Devill for these great and incomprehensible mercies of God: A great and intollerable abuse of such blessed opportunities, and such as, (although it doth not at al justifie men in the abolition of them, but should rather have set them upon the Reformation of those miscarriages, and the restitution of such times unto the first and profitable institution of them, That these evills and corruptions being removed, the divine Solemnities, and Religious Duties might have been returned and advanced still amongst us, to the comfort of the Church, and the honour of the name of God) Yet they may justly provoke God to deprive us of the comfort of these joyfull Celebrities, which wee have so miserably abused to his dishonour, and the hurt of our selves, and of our brethren: But these being the errours of particular men, they do not blemish the constitution of the Church in these things, which intendeth not such times for such evill purposes, but for the service and honour of God, and the edification of his people. And therefore as it must be the care of all good Christians to seperate the abuses in practice: So it is their part and duty to yeeld a ready obedience unto so profitable and wholesome a constitution; and as in other Festivalls, so in this of the Nativity of Christ, &c. This being as it were the *rising of the Sunne of righteousnesse upon us with healing in his wings*, and that whereon all the succedent worke of our redemption and salvation doth depend: And therefore as this doth in an eminent and speciall manner chalenge

lenge our praiſes and ſolemne ſervices and acknowledgments unto God for ſo great a mercy: So the Authority of the Church in appoynting a ſolemne time, for ſuch ſolemne ſervice doth ſerve an holy and Scripture end, very acceptable to God, and by ſuch a meanes, which he himſelfe hath approved, and allowed the Church of God to make uſe off, and doth juſtly require our obedience thereunto, which wee cannot withdraw ordinarily, without making a breach in that Communion of Saints, which is both our comfort to enjoy, and our duty to maintaine,

And theſe grounds being thus layd, and well underſtood, I hope may ſatisfie any peaceable minded Chriſtians, and arme them againſt all materiall temptations that your Queries (which you ſeeme to thinke ſuch Giants) can offer againſt it; and therefore I might well enough perhaps ſet a period heere unto this preſent buſineſſe: But leſt you ſhould thinke your ſelfe deſpiſed, or grow wiſe in your owne conceipt, and for your further correction, and the more full ſatisfaction of others, I offer you and them this ſhort anſwer unto your Queries; and if you or any other ſhall thinke them in any thing wanting in that clearenеſſe which yours, and ſome other mens apprehenſions may perhaps require; I ſhall by Gods grace be ready if I may be allowed liberty to doe it: To render all things out of queſtion, and to reſolve all doubts that may reſt behinde in a faire, calme, and Chriſtian diſputation, and diſcuſſion of the point with you or any other that ſhall in a ſober and ingenuous way deſire to enter into diſcourſe with me thereabout.

In the meane time take this briefe Reply unto your Demands.

To your firſt Quære.

Whether ſuch religious cuſtomes as are binding to all the Churches of Ieſus Chriſt, ought not to have ſure footing upon the Word of God or Apoſtolicall practice?

Anſwer, That it is ground enough for the eſtabliſhment of Cuſtomes in the Church, and to bind all Churches to the Chriſtian obſervation thereof, ſo far as is required unto Church Cuſtomes, and matters of order. &c. That ſuch Cuſtomes and Obſervations beingin themſelves harmeleſſe, and conducible to thoſe ends which Gods

word preſcribeth, are commanded unto us by the Authority of the Church Catholick; and becauſe this Quære is ſomewhat too wide for the particular drift you aime at; give me leave to take away all doubt, to contract it a little by adding this Corolary: That in ſuch things the Authority of any particular Church is ſufficient to binde thoſe that are within the Verge of it. The Examples of the Feaſt of Purim and of Dedication before mentioned will come in ſeaſonably heere for the confirmation of this.

To your ſecond Quære.

Whether you can ſubſtantially prove that Chriſt was borne on the 25 of December? And what your proofes are?

Anſwer. That becauſe as wee have layd downe the deſignation of this or that particular day is a thing in it ſelfe indifferent (though the day being knowne wherein ſuch mercies were performed may ſeeme more convenient then another.) The maine thing that wee reſt upon being this: That God may be ſolemnely praiſed for ſo great a mercy, and to this end, that that day what ever it be, which is ſet apart by the Church for that holy purpoſe be duely obſerved: Therefore although there is perhaps more to be ſayd heerin then you are aware of; yet to make ſhort worke, and that they may be the eaſilier ſatisfied, who are not able to examine Antiquities: I anſwer. that it is not at all neceſſary for us to prove ſubſtantially that Chriſt was borne upon the 25 of *December*; it is ſufficient for us that the Authority of the Church hath appoynted that day to performe the duty of praiſe therefore unto God, neither doe wee ſo much depend upon that day, but if upon good reaſon an equall Authority had deſigned any other, it might be indifferent to us; ſo that God may have his honour in the ſolemnization of his great mercies, whether in this moneth, or that moneth, on this day, or that day, is of ſmall concernment, but in poynt of order, peace, uniformity, and obedience; to dote upon this or that day otherwiſe were ſuperſtitious.

To your third Quære.

Whether the celebration of that day (grant he was borne on it)

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can be clearely warranted by you from Scripture? And what your Scriptures are?

Answer, It is answered already in the Reply made to the two former, where you have beene shewed, that it is neither necessary to be proved that Christ was borne upon that day, nor yet that there needes any particular Scripture warrant for the observation of such dayes, more then is expressed in the answer to the first, and the grounds that are layd before you, and so much as hath been shewed wee have abundantly for this day. *Viz.* That the Church hath power to appoynt a day for so holy and excellent an end prescribed in Scripture, and warranted unto us by the practice of a Quire of Angells, of *Simeon* and *Anna*, *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, in the Divine Story.

To your fourth Quære.

Whether you can cleare it by sound consequence from the New Testament, though not set downe there in totidem verbis?

Answer, That which hath been sayd may suffice, in that the celebration of this day is appoynted by sufficient Authority, for those ends which are commanded in the New Testament, as is the rendring praise to God for so great a blessing of the New Testament, and is a meanes allowed by God for such purpose, and conducible thereunto, as hath been shewed in the grounds.

To the fifth Quære.

Whether you can doe it by universall tradition?

Answer, That it is well knowne that the observation of this day hath been very Ancient, and doth appeare to be of universall reception; as (if leasure and opportunity would permit) might be manifested more abundantly, but for the present it may suffice to set down that notable testimony of St. *Cyprian*, a very Ancient Father, in his booke *de Nativitate Christi in initio. Adest* (saith he, speaking of this Festivall of the Nativity of Christ) *Christi multum desiderata &*

dim expectata Nativitas, adest Solemnitas inclita, & in præsentia salvatoris, grates, & laudes, Visitatori suo per orbem terrarum Sancta reddit Ecclesia. There is now present the much desired, and long expected Nativity of Christ; now is present that famous Solemnity or Festivall, and the holy Church throughout all the World doth render thankes and praises to her visiter in the presence of our Saviour; and though it be sufficient to binde us; that so wholesome custome is enjoyned by Authenticall Authority in this Church and Nation; yet this and other testimonies that might be brought of the Antiquity and universality thereof, doe much strengthen the obligation that lyes upon us, for the Religious observation thereof.

To your sixt Quære.

Whether (in case it can be evidenced by none of these, viz. plaine Text, solid Inference, universall Tradition) it be not a meere humane invention, and so Will worship? And how you will one day acquit your selves before God, for placing, and crying up mens Inventions, instead of the institutions of Iesus Christ? And whether it were not faithfull dealing with poore simple people to tell them that you have neither of these to warrant it?

Answer, it is already avoyded, and needeth no further Reply but this; first, that you have been taught if you can learne that wee have inference enough to satisfie men that will be content with evidence, and wish you would attempt nothing in the Church, but what you could pleade halfe so much for: Secondly, that the observation of these particular dayes is not enjoyned by the Church, or used by us, as any substantiall part of worship, but as a circumstance of worship, and so can be no will-worship, no more then your appoynting this or that particular houre for preaching, and prayer upon a Lecture day, or the appoynting of dayes of thanksgiving for Victories, for temporall deliverances, or of Publique Fasts by humane Authority (which as to the designation of the particular times are unquestionably of humane invention) are therefore to be accounted will-worship; unless you will have the will-worship to lye in this; that these dayes wee speake off are appoynted by good and full Authority, and that Christ

Christ is remembred therein; and now I intreate you to consider how you will one day acquit your selfe before God, for slandering and crying downe the wholesome orders and constitutions of the Church, to bring in division, confusion, and prophanation; and whether it were not faithfull dealing with those poore simple people, that you or others have seduced into seditious and factious courses, and murmurings against Government and Order, to tell them that you understood not things your selves, nor have taught them in the wayes of peace and righteousnesse, as you should have done.

To your seaventh Quære.

(Since dayes and times commanded by God himselfe to be observed under the Law, were, and are unlawfull under the Gospel) Whether dayes and times commanded by men, and not by God, under the Gospell, are not lesse lawfull.

Ans. Those daies and times that were commanded by God himselfe to be observed under the Law, were appointed by him for that time, as types and figures of the things of Christ, as Saint *Paul* will instruct you *Coloss.* 2. 16. 17. and in regard of that typicall use, and the Legall necessity thereof are vanished at the comming of Christ, which is the body and substance of those shaddowes; and therefore though they be so far become unlawfull, it will by no meanes infer that therefore those daies and times which are commanded by men with sufficient warrant from God under the Gospell as conducible meanes unto Gospell-ends, and for the solemnizing of the glory of God for Gospell blessings, should be concluded unlawfull, since the aforesaid reason of the abolition of those things of the Law, is no way appliable unto the Festivals, or other wholsome constitutions in the time of the Gospell, which are neither injoyned as types, nor as things necessary to salvation, but as matters of order, and circumstantiall meanes for the promotion of other substantiall duties, not opposing, but asserting and magnifying the great blessings that God hath revealed, and imparted unto us in, and by, the Messias now come. But for your further instruction, I desire you to take notice, that in the Feasts of the Jewes, as there was something Ceremoniall, so there

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was ſomething Morrall: that they were of unalterable neceſſity reſtrained to ſuch and ſuch particular times, that they were to be celebrated with ſuch and ſuch particular Ceremonies, and were therein types and figures of the things of Chriſt, and the time of the Goſpell, and that by the indiſpencible obligation of the divine precept; in theſe and ſuch like conſiderations, they were Ceremoniall and temporary, belonging unto that Sate of the Jewiſh Church; But if they be conſidered as they were certaine ſolemne and convenient times ſet apart for the publique worſhip of God, and for the more ſolemne teſtification of their thankfulneſſe unto him, for thoſe great bleſſings and deliverances that they received from him; This was, as a learned Authour tells us, *morale, & naturale, & cum cæteris omnibus gentibus commune*, it was *morall* and *naturall*, and *common with them unto other nations*. Now though that which is typicall and ceremoniall be aboliſhed as a ſhadow by the comming of the ſubſtance, yet that which is morall and naturall remayneth; it is ſtill not only lawfull, but pious for the Jewes to ſet apart ſome times to prayſe God for their deliverance out of Ægypt, and for thoſe other bleſſings which that Church received from him, and ſo that the typicall and properly legall uſe, together with the indiſpenſable neceſſity of thoſe particular times and ceremonies be caſt away, it were no impiety in them, as matters of order, to make uſe of ſome or more of the ſame times which they formerly obſerved for this morall purpoſe. Yea we find St Paul Acts 18: 21. and 20. 16. reſolving and indeavouring to keepe one of thoſe Jewiſh feaſts at Jeruſalem, long after the aſcenſion of Chriſt. and the abolition of the ceremoniall part of the Jewiſh Law, and to take advantage of that ſolemnity to glorifie God amongſt them. And if all this will not ſave you from a wonder, I intreat you to conſider that the effect of the abolition of the Ceremoniall Law, was the taking away of the legall neceſſity and the typicall uſe of them, not the rendering of the matter of thoſe Ceremonies unlawfull; and for your better ſatisfaction in this point, I refer you to a Treatiſe of mine lately ſet forth, called, *The fights of the Church and Common Wealth of England*, pag. 312. 313. &c. where I hope you will find this matter abundantly cleared. And now the foundation of your ſeventh Quære being thus ſearched and found to be of ſo ſandy a conſtitution, we need not trouble our ſelves any more about the Quære it ſelfe: but to tell you in the words of a Reverend Divine, *Quicquid nonnulli contrà afferre ſolent*

Devin. in Coloſſ. 2. 16.

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pie & prudenter profpectum eſt ab Antiquis patribus, ut anniverſaria in Eccleſia celebrarentur ingentia illa beneficia incarnationis filii Dei, paſſionis, reſurrectionis, aſcenſionis, miſſionis Spiritus Sancti, quorum omnium memoriam ſolennitatibus conſtitutis conſecramus, ne volumine temporum ingrata ſurreperet nobis oblivio, ut loquitur Aug. de Civit. Dei. lib. 10. c. 4. *Whatſoever ſome are wont to bring to the contrary, it was pionſly and prudently provided of the ancient Fathers, That there ſhould be anniverſary or yearely celebrations of thoſe great benefits, of the incarnation of the ſonne of God, of his paſſion, reſurrection, aſcenſion, and of the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt; the memorialls of all which, we conſecrate by appointed ſolemnities, leſt, as S. Aug. ſpeaketh, by the courſe of the times an unthankfull forgetfulnes therof ſhould ſteale upon us.* And the ſame learned Authour will ſhew you that we are invited heerunto by the obligation of gratitude that we owe unto God, as publique benefits are to be publiquely acknowledged, and to be celebrated with publique thankſgiving: which cannot commodiouſly be done, unleſſe they that have the rule of the Church and Common wealth, doe appoint ſet dayes for the people to come together to that purpoſe. Joel. 2. 15.

That we are incouraged heereunto by the peoples benefit which they may reape heereby in being upon ſuch occaſions made acquainted with the chiefe myſteries of ſalvation, which whether they ſhalbe inſtructed in, or no, is a matter of too great concernment, to be left to the diſcretion of every private Miniſter; and therefore the Church hath thought fit to call upon them for it by theſe Feſtivals. And I pray God the attempts of the abolition of theſe memorialls, be not the drifts of ſome ſecret plot of Sathan, to make way for the ſtealing of Chriſtianity out of this Nation: if we conſider the motions of ſome other engines of his, together with this in theſe times, I doubt wee may find but too much cauſe to ſuſpect it, and cauſe enough for all good people to deſire to prevent it, by being unwilling to part with any the leaſt lawfull meanes, that may ſerve to keep up the memory and impreſſions of Chriſt, and his wonderfull mercies in our hearts.

He will ſhew you alſo, as I have done, how this practiſe is confirmed unto us by the examples of the godly people in the Scripture, who have appointed ſet and yearly dayes for ſuch purpoſes, beſides thoſe that were commanded expreſly and particularly by God himſelfe. And I can adde that the ſame is yet further confirmed unto us, by the judgement and practice of holy men in the Chriſtian Church, not only of the Ancients, but of many famous moderne Proteſtant Di-

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vines. As *Melanthon*, *Hemingius*, *Sculletus*, *&c.* all which being put into the ſame ſcale with the Authority of the Church of England, and the Law, which hath yet found no Authority equall unto it, to diſſolve the Acts thereof in this kinde, will I doubt not weigh downe all the ſeeming reaſons or divinity upon which you have grounded your Quæries.

To your eighth Quære.

Whether the true and genuine Interpretation of Chriſtmas *be* Chriſt man? *And whether to perſwade people 'tis ſo, be not to abuſe and delude them? And whether we may not as well interpret* Candlemas Candleman, Michaelmas Michaelman, *as* Chriſtmas Chriſtman?

Anſwer, That this is a queſtion ſo childiſh of ſo vaine importance, and ſo of no concernement at all to the buſineſſe propounded: That I might be excuſed if I ſhould ſay no more, but either to wiſh you more wiſdome and ſobriety in the things of God and his Church, or if you know any that is guilty of making ſo fooliſh a deſcant upon that name of *Chriſtmas* as your Quære preſents, to leave you to him for a Reply; neither the Church of England nor I are bound to juſtifie the follies of particular men: But leaſt your inſinuated quarrell at the name of *Chriſtmas*, ſhould meete with any ſuch weake judgements, as to produce any ſcruple (premiſing this, that theſe are things that neither the Church of England, nor I conceive any diſcreet childe thereof will ſtand upon any further then they ſerve to make us underſtand one another, and I wiſh all quarrels about names were ſo at an end amongſt us) I ſay yet farther, that the interpretation of learned Biſhop *Andrewes* might have beene better thought on by you, then that fond one you have mentioned, reducing Chriſt-mas to *Chriſti miſſa*, and taking *miſſa* for *miſſio*; ſo that it may preſent the importance of the Feaſt. *Viz.* The ſending of Chriſt into the world, or if this be liable to ſome exception; yet it cannot be denyed but the word Maſſe, however it hath been corrupted in latter times, is from *miſſa*, and I believe you may finde that the word *miſſa* hath been of good uſe in the Church, and derived from a good and laudable cuſtome

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of dismissing the *Catechumeni* before the Communion in the Primitive times, and may import as much as the Office, or Communion of the faithfull, and then Christs-masse may sound as much as the Office or Communion of the faithfull upon Christs day, or in the praise of Christ, or in memoriall of him; or if you are loath to admit of this in justification of the word *missa*, I intreate you yet to allow thus much: That however evill the word is in the use of the Church of Rome, yet since you know it hath no such evill importance in the sense of the Church of England (and it is not unlawfull to reforme the abuse of words as well as things) there can be no harme in the use of that title for distinction, no more then it was for St. *Luke* in the 17. of the Acts v. 22. to comply so far with custome as to call the street in Athens by the name of *Mars* his street, although *Mars* were an Heathen Idol, or to call *Dionysius* by the title of the *Areopagite* v. 34. I advise you therefore to take the Counsell of St. *Paul* hereafter, for your owne good and the quiet of others, and the Church, that instead of being such a one as he condemneth, 1. *Tim.* 6.4.5. sick of a spirituall tympany, and νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεις καὶ λογομαχίας, ἐξ ὧν γίνεται φθόνος, ἔρις, βλασφημίαι, ὑπόνοιαι πονηραὶ, διαπαρατριβαὶ διεφθαρμένων ἀνθρώπων τὸν νοῦν, καὶ ἀπεστερημένων τῆς ἀληθείας, *doating or madding about questions and strife of words, whereof commeth envy, strife, railings, evill surmisings, froward disputations of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth*; you would become such as he adviseth, 2. Tim. 14. 23. *That you strive not about words, which is to no profit, but to the perverting of the hearers*; and that you would *put away foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they engender strife.*

To your ninth Quære.

Whether the Saints are bound to rejoyce in the Birth of Christ on that day men superstitiously call Christmas, *more then at other times? And whether the Lords day be not* [*the*] *day appointed for them to rejoyce on?*

Ans. Leaving your imputation that you lay of superstition upon the name of *Christmas* to the correction of that which hath been already sayd unto the Quære next before. I answer, that though Christians

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are bound at all times to rejoyce in the birth of Christ, which is sufficient to condemne the boldnesse of those that forbid men upon any time or day to do it by that rule of the Apostle, *Philipp.* 4.4. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and againe I say rejoyce; yet to helpe our infirmities, and to stir up our backwardnesse, and to make for the greater cheerfulnesse and solemnity of this joy, the Church hath done well and piously to appoint some speciall times to call us together to rejoyce in the great mercies of God, and in that regard it is more especially required of all her Children to do it at such times then at other times, and the fault is the greater to omit it then, in as much as to the neglect of the universall duty is added the sinne of disobedience against the wholesome orders of the Church, and a division therein of our selves from the Body, and a denyall of that concurrence and assistance that wee ought to give in the communion and fellowship of Gods people in those things which are publickly performed for the celebration of the praise and worship of God, and for the advancement of divine comforts in the Congregations. And though it be true that the Lords day is a day wherein they ought to rejoyce, which yet as to the particular day, is but an holy circumstance, and a matter of order, though established by great Authority, notwithstanding it is not (the) day in such a sence, as your parenthesis would perhaps insinuate, as to exclude all other dayes from the businesse of solemne rejoycing in Gods mercies; for how then will the fifth of *November*, and the dayes of Thanksgiving, that have beene of late appoynted, be justified? and therefore your question makes nothing against our conclusion; for though that day be to be observed for a day of joy in God, it doth not forbid others to be so employed.

To the tenth Quære.

Whether Christmas *day ought in any respect to be esteemed above another of the Weeke dayes? And whether people may not without offence to God follow their lawfull vocations on that day?*

Answer, In it selfe no day is necessarily to be esteemed better then another; for as the Apostle tells us, *he that esteemeth all dayes alike doth*

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it to the Lord. But in the use of it, as a matter of order, and as it is dedicated by a lawfull power in the Church, in a more especiall manner then the rest, in respect of obedience, order, and compliance with those sacred ends for which they are so designed, Christmas day, and other Festivalls of the Church ought to be esteemed above another day: For it is the duty of Christians to comply with one another, and to obey Authority in those things that are profitable and conducible to holy and good purposes: And therefore it will follow, that without necessity, for people to depart from this Rule, and to doe it with contempt of Authority, and to the discouragement and hinderance of such holy ends and duties, by following their ordinary vocations which are lawfull at other times, is a breach of good order, a violation of unity, an hinderance to piety, and the holy Solemnity of such times, as well as to doe it upon a day of Fasting or Humiliation, instituted by humane Authority: and cannot be so done without an offence to God.

To your eleaventh Quære.

Whether you thinke the Parliament and Assembly have erred and played the fooles in condemning and raising out Holy dayes not warranted in the Word? And whether to observe them, be not highly to dislike and flatly to contradict (in poynt of practice at least) their proceedings in order to a Reformation?

Answer. I doubt not to say that they have erred in divers respects: First, in making unnecessary changes in the Church, which ought not to be done, but upon urgent causes; but doth discover in them that doe it a love unto change, which the wise man condemneth, *Prov.* 24. 21. and is ordinarily of evill consequence to the Church, as wee finde by too lamentable experience; for whilst the people like those that are sick of a Feaver have thought good *mutationibus pro remediis uti*, to take such kinde of changes for medicines, their remedies have proved their greatest diseases; and now wee see how sick they are grown of their Physitians, and how sick the Physitians are of their owne administrations: Secondly, they have erred in going about to abolish so harmelesse and usefull a meanes of the promoting of Gods glory,

and of the edification of the people: Thirdly, in undertaking to dissolve so laudable customes, and so universally and anciently received, and established by full power of the State and Church, either without any Authority thereunto or by a power inferiour unto that, whereby they were constituted: Fourthly, in doing those things without any admission of those that are contrary minded to be heard, or any faire discussion or debate of those differences that are in mens judgements thereabout: and therefore their proceedings therein are, and may be justly disliked and contradicted both by declaration and practice, without lying open to any such charge as you mention of opposing proceedings in order to Reformation, properly so called; such undertakings with the rest that are like them, being rather in order to a deformation. But whether in this they have playd the fooles, or no, I leave that to you to determine.

To your twelfth Quæ.e.

Whether *(since most men and women in* England *doe blindely and superstitiously beleeve Christ was borne that day) preaching on it, doth not nourish and strengthen them in that belief?*

Answ. Although it be admitted to be a matter of some uncertainty whether our Saviour were borne upon that day, or no, yet (it being not materiall unto the lawfulnesse and wholsomnesse of the observation of the solemnity, as hath beene declared) if it bee an error in the people to apprehend so, yet it is an harmelesse one, and without the danger of superstition, which yet Preaching upon that day doeth neyther necessarily nourish nor strengthen in them. I shall not deny but there hath beene some difference in Antiquity concerning the very day upon which Christ was borne; but *Hospinian*, who was no friend unto the Church in these things, confesseth, That from the most ancient times, it was celebrated on the 25. of *December*; which hee prooveth out of *Theophylus*, a very ancient Bishop of *Cesarea Palestina*, who lived about the time of *Commodus* and *Severus* the Emperours. The Arguments that are brought against the reception of this day, for the very day of our Saviours Birth, from the imposition of the Taxe of the Romane Emperour, and from the shepheards watching of their sheepe

sheepe by night, are not at all concludent, but of weake importance, to overthrow so ancient and received an opinion in the Church: Though that time might be lesse convenient for people to travell into their owne Countries, as was required in that imposition of *Augustus*, yet it is no strange thing in Magistrates, and those both prudent and pious, to passe through such small and private inconveniences for the obtaining supplies of publique necessities; it would be a very weake argument, if any should heereafter undertake to prove this unhappy Parliament began not in *November*, because that Moneth is usually none of the best seasons to travell from the severall parts of this Kingdome to *London* in. And though sheepe are tender creatures, yet that season is not of the same bitternesse in all Climates, and if I mistake not, as tender as they are, they are even in this Northerne and cold Climate folded sometimes without dores in the winter: if the difference about this point be such that no certaine resolution can bee found, it is lawfull for the Church to make choice of such a day for the purpose of this solemnity, as appeares most convenient. And what day more convenient, then that which as it is confessed to have beene most anciently received, so is commended too by the universality of the practise and consent at least of all the Westerne Churches therein? and if God be served and praysed by us in such holy and solemne maner as is due for so great a mercy, upon that day which the Church hath injoyned, it will be, no doubt, as acceptable to God, as if it were done upon some other day of your choyce, whether it be the very day of Christs birth or no: and I hope you doe thinke it fit, that some day or other may bee imployed in so good a businesse. The onely question then will remaine, whether the Church and Magistrate, or you bee fitter to choose, which is not worth the discussing.

To the thirteenth Quære.

Whether this Feast *had not its rise and growth from Christians conformity to the mad Feasts* Saturnalia (*kept in* December *to* Saturne *the Father of Gods*) *in which there was a Sheafe offered to* Ceres *Goddesse of Corne; a hymne in her praise called* ὕλοι *or* ἴουλος? *And whether those Christians by name, to cloake*

it, did not afterwards call it Yule; *and* Christmas *(as though it were for Christs honour?) And whether it be not yet by some (more ancient then truely or knowingly religious) called* Yule, *and the mad playes (wherewith 'tis celebrated, like those* Saturnalia) Yule *games? And whether from the offering of that Sheafe to* Ceres; *from that song in her praise; from those gifts the Heathens gave their friends in the Calends of* January, omnis gratia; *did not arise or spring our blazes;* Christmas *Kartles, and* New yeares *gifts?*

Answ. That the originall and growth of so pious and holy a practise in the Christian Church, should be allowed no other root but a supposed conformity of Christians to the madde feasts of *Saturnalia*, when there are so many better and cleared fountaines to derive this from, in the order that it hath unto Scripture end and duties, to Gospel and Christian performances, and in the warrant that it hath from Scripture examples in like matters, is an argument of some want of charity in those that goe about to infect men with such perswasions. Charity engageth us to judge the best even of the actions of private men, much more of the publike constitutions and observations of the Church; what ever abuses have beene brought in by wicked and loose men to corrupt and deprave these wholesome ordinances, (which we approve not nor will undertake to justifie) There is no conformity nor compliance at all, betweene the holy aymes and intentions of the Church of God, in the appointment of this or other festivalls, and the franticke, loose, and impious manage of the *Saturnalia* among the Heathens. These are appointed by the Church to bee dayes of piety and sobriety, of prayse unto God for his great mercies, of spirituall joy in his divine comforts and holy delights in our Christian societies, of hospitality and mutuall offices of Christian love one to another, which are the true and proper employments of holy festivalls, commended and warranted unto us by the word of God. If any practises have crept in (as there have too many) to the depravation of these times, and disappointment of those ends for which they were instituted, by riot and loosenes, or such rude cariages and demeanours which may be too truly sorted with the Heathenish *Saturnalia*, they have been anciently reproved, as *Hospinian* will informe you by that which hee hath

hath cited out of that famous Oration of *Gregory Nazianzen* upon the Nativity of Christ: And he will tell you a Story too if you will beleeve it of one *Otherus* and some others to the number of 15. who being reproved by *Rupertus* a Priest for prophaning that night of our Lords Nativity, by light and lascivious dancing and singing, and required from him, *ut ab hujusmodi levitate in nocte tam sancta desisterent*: That they would desist from such lenity in so holy a night, when they would not yeeld unto this wholesome advice, But persisted in the vaine exercises they were about, upon the prayer of *Rupertus* that they might continue dancing so all the yeare long, They did so continue night and day for the space of a whole yeare: and he cites *Trithemius in chron. Hirsang.* for the Authour of this Story; which if it be true doth not at all oppose, but confirme these constitutions of the Church, as the judgements of God sent upon those that are the prophaners of the Lords day, are brought to justifie the observation thereof; it doth indeede disallow the abuses thereof, which as they were anciently condemned, so wee condemne them still, being contrary unto the righteous commands of God, so to the wholesome institutions of the Church: I earnestly exhort all Christians carefully to avoyd all such courses and miscarriges, and to sanctifie this and other such like Festivalls unto God in holy and Christian duties as they ought, and the Church enjoynes, lest they answer the contrary dearely unto God, as well for the enormity of their vitious carriages, as for the prophanation and scandall that they thereby bring upon these profitable Orders of the Church, and their sacrilegious robbing of God of such times which are consecrated to his Divine Worship, That they may employ them in the service of the Devill: But in the meane time I cannot but wonder at the strange dispensations of these times, wherein for ought appeares, there is more strictnes used against the preaching of the word of God, and holy exercises upon these dayes, then against any of the foresayd abuses and miscariages. Wee have heard of the persecution and imprisonment of Ministers for attempting to preach the Word of God, upon the festivall of Christs Nativity, and of strict and forcible prohibition thereof; but whether there hath beene halfe so much strictnesse against riot, or lightnesse, or vanity, at such times, let it be considered; and surely such dealing is no good character

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of a Reformation. They that do so, winnow not with Gods sieve, but the Divels, shaking out the wheat, and retayning the chaffe; they are no good Physitians, that purge out the good and wholesome humours, and leave those that are corrupt and distempered behind, nor is this the way to procure health unto the body. In the name of God if they meane to reforme, as they talke, let them distinguish betweene good and evill, betweene healthfull and profitable institutions, and pernicious and abusive depravations, and let these be removed, and those established if it doth appeare that the time of this Festivall doth comply with the time of the Heathens *Saturnalia*, This leaves no charge of impiety upon it; for since things are best cured by their contraries; It was both wisedome and piety in the ancient Christians, (whose work it was to convert the Heathens from such as well as other superstitions and miscarriages) To vindicate such times from that service of the Devill, by appoynting them to the more solemne and especiall service of God and to recall people from that practise of wickednesse by calling them unto the practise of true holinesse thereupon. As for that you adde about your *Yule* games, it is not materiall, after that which hath beene sayd, and therefore for brevity sake I passe it over. The Blazes are foolish and vaine, and not countenanced by the Church. Christmasse Karoles if they be such as are fit for the time, and of holy and sober composures, and used with Christian sobriety and piety, they are not unlawfull, and may be profitable, if they be sung with grace in the heart. New yeares gifts, if performed without superstition (and you must have ground ere you may charge them with it) may be harmles provocations to Christian love, and mutuall testimonies thereof to good purpose, and never the worse, because the Heathens have them at the like times. The Heathens use to eate at noone, and so doe wee; if it be harmelesse to joyne with them in houres designed for acts of nature; why not in dayes designed by us for acts of love and mutuall affection; if those dayes and their practice thereupon be tainted with superstition, it will not follow that ours must needes be so, or is it not lawfull for us to employ those dayes well, because they doe ill? But this is no Religious but a Civill matter, and therefore not requisite to stand much upon it; no great matter whether that custome be held up or no, and yet there is no need

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in such times as these to discourage and forbid acts of love and mutuall kindenesse. This Age is not sick of any superfluities in this kinde in the generall, and therefore no great needs of physick for such diseases: Trouble not your selfe therefore any more about this matter; if you dislike New-yeares gifts, I would advise your Parishioners not to trouble your conscience with them, and all will be well.

To your fourteenth Quære.

Whether conformity to, and retention of Heathenish Customes be commendable in Christians, suitable or agreeable with Gospel Principles, though under pretext of Christs Honour and Worshippe?

Answer, You seeme to me to be ignorant, and have taken up opinions at too easie a rate; give me leave therefore to informe you a little: All Customes are not Heathenish that are observed among Heathens; it is a custome with Heathens to kneele at prayer, yet this is no Heathenish custome; it is a custome with Heathens to institute publique Fasts, and dayes of Humiliation in times of danger and calamity, will you say therefore that Christians are Heathenish, or comply with Heathenish customes in doing the like? Or if wee may joyne with them in appoynting dayes of fasting, why not as well in appoynting dayes of feasting, as long as wee joyne not with them in superstition about either? Wee must not deny Christ because the Devills confessed him. It is no good Christianity in the people of this Age to hate their brethren, because the Publicans are friendly unto theirs, *Math.* 5. 47. Wee are not sure bound to prophane all times that the Heathens have superstitiously consecrated, if wee are, I doubt you will scarce have halfe an houre in the day or night left you for your devotions: Wee may joyne with Heathens or any in those things, that are good and wholesom. Heathenish customes cannot be good, but many customes of Heathens may: They have learnt, it is probable many practises of Religion from

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the people of God, and have corrupted the Coppies that they have taken from the Originalls, it is not necessary therefore for Gods people to cast away the Originalls which are pure and good. Heathenish customes are such as stand opposite to the
β doctrine of Christ and the Gospel: The Religious observation of these Festivalls makes for both; to appoynt and observe a day holyly and religiously for the solemne praise of God for Christ, and Gospel mercies, cannot be sayd to be against Christ or the Gospel; since the former is honoured, and the latter preached and published by this meanes: This therefore is no Heathenish custome; take you heed of complying with an Heathenish designe of abolishing the memory of Christ and Christianity from amongst us, it is a danger worthy of a double caution, it is not a pretext of Christs honeur, But the truth thereof that justifies these dayes, and is the proper and holy businesse of them; wee desire not to march under such colours, but leave them rather to those that under pretext of Religion are busie to overthrow all Religion amongst us: I neede not tell you who they are, but wish you
β take heede of them.

To your fifteenth Quære.

Whether you are not bound to prove your practice for the conviction and satisfaction of your Brethren, whose duty it is to walke with you in things agreeable to the minde of Christ? And in case you cannot; Whether you ought not to acknowledge your errour, lay downe your practice (as others have done theirs) no longer befooling and misleading the people committed to your charge?

Answer, I have sayd thus much for your conviction and satisfaction, and wish it may worke so well with you, that as it is your duty, so it may be your practice to walke with us in things agreeable to the minde of Christ; and therefore I hope wee are sufficiently discharged from any necessity of confessing any errour in these

these things, and that it doth by this time appeare that there is much more neede of reforming yours, and of laying downe your practice as others have done theirs, no longer befooling nor misleading the people committed unto your Charge; that you may from hence forth teach them the wayes of peace and righteousnes.

To your sixteenth Quære.

Whether in case you returne no Answer to these Quæries, I have not ground sufficient to conclude you utterly unable to give any rationall accounte of your practice, now put upon it?

Answer, Sir, you have an Answer to your Quæries, and therefore have no ground left you sufficient to conclude us unable to give any rationall account of our practice, which I wish you may receive with a Christian minde, that you and others may reape the fruit thereof: Let your Study be Unity, for that is the way to felicity.

The God of peace and holynesse direct you and us all into the wayes of peace and holynesse, that wee may no longer foster divisions and strife amongst us, to the joy of our adversaries, and the reproach of the Gospel; but that following the truth in love, wee may in all things grow up into him, which is the head, even Christ.

Now for all the paines I have taken to answer your Quæries, I shall desire you to answer but one of mine, *viz.*

Whether you think doth savour of most piety and good will unto Christ and his honour, to forbid the preaching of Gods word, and the celebration of the praise of God for his great mercies upon the 25 *of* December, *or upon any other day, or to enjoyne it? Or whether it becomes Christians to prohibit the worke of God at any time?*

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An addition of ſome teſtimonies out of Antiquity concerning this Feſtivall.

Theophaniam hoc noſtrum feſtum nominamus, in quo mundi ſalutarem concelebramus diem Domini natalem, Baſil. in Serm. de humanâ Chriſti generatione.

Feſtum eſt omnium Feſtorum maximè venerandum, quod ſi quis appellet omnium Feſtorum Metropolim, haud quaquam aberret, Chryſoſtomus in Oratione pro Philogonio.

Γενέθλια τοῦ σωτῆρος *natales ſervatoris & ἐπιφανίαν adventum ſeu apparitionem vocat.* Nazianz.

Natalem Domini ſicut & paſcha, & penteceſtim majora ſolemnia vocat, Beda, lib. 5. c. 19.

The Antiquity of this Feaſt is ſo great, that *Hoſpinian* confeſſeth, *Quando & a quo hoc Feſtum inſtitutum ſit certo ſciri non poteſt*: So that for ought he or any can ſay againſt it, it may have its inſtitution even from the Apoſtles themſelves.

The ſame Authour acknowledgeth the mention of it to have been very Ancient in the Church, by *Theophilus* Biſhop of *Caſarea Palaſtina*, who lived about the time of *Commodus* and *Severus*.

And he ſheweth how afterwards in the time of *Maximinus* this Feſtivall was glorified by the Martyrdome of divers Chriſtians at *Nicomedia*, who were there burnt together with the Church wherein they were celebrating this holy day, ſee *Nicephorus, lib. 7. cap. 6.* and wee have good reaſon to believe theſe Martyrs were as good Chriſtians as ſome that would ſequeſter the holyneſſe of Feaſts, Churches, and all other men upon earth, ſcarcely ſparing the Saints in Heaven, that they may arrogate the Title of holynes and ſaintſhip onely to themſelves.

FINIS.